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from
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Health Care Information Technology (Health IT)

■ **YESTERDAY'S PRESIDENTIAL ACTION**

- Yesterday, President Bush visited Cleveland, Ohio, to highlight the benefits of health care information technology in saving lives and improving health care for all Americans. Better health information technology is essential to improving America's health care system.
- The President's Health Information Technology Plan is an important part of his overall health care agenda to make America's first-rate health care safer, more accessible, and more affordable.
- The President's budget for FY 2006 continues to support the use of health information technology by increasing funding to \$125 million for demonstration projects that will help test the effectiveness of health IT and allow for widespread adoption in the health care industry. The Administration is also seeking an additional \$50 million for FY 2005 (in addition to the \$50 million already appropriated by Congress for FY 2005) to support the use of health IT.
- An important new step in the President's health information technology plan is today's announcement of the electronic prescribing (e-prescribing) proposed regulation by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). This new E-prescribing regulation will improve the care seniors receive in Medicare by helping to bring electronic prescriptions to seniors when the prescription drug benefit takes effect in January 2006. It will also increase broader adoption of e-prescribing across the entire health care system.

■ **E-PRESCRIBING: THE NEWEST STEP IN THE PRESIDENT'S HEALTH IT PLAN**

- **President Bush signed into law the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003, which calls for standards to enable e-prescribing for the Medicare Part D program.** Today, CMS issued the e-prescribing proposed standards rule to help enable the

availability of e-prescribing when the Medicare Part D program begins on January 1, 2006.

- E-prescribing will improve the quality and safety of patient care through reduced medication errors and monitoring for adverse drug reactions, and could improve care and increase efficiency in physician offices.
- As a key link between patients, doctors, and pharmacies, accelerated adoption of e-prescribing in Medicare will help to spur e-prescribing and the adoption of electronic health records throughout the Nation's health care system.

■ **UPDATING AMERICA'S HEALTH CARE SYSTEM**

Information technology is changing American industry. At the end of the 1990s, most American industries were spending approximately \$8,000 per worker for IT, but the health care industry was investing only approximately \$1,000 per worker. The United States has always been innovative with medical care, but continues to face major hurdles in our health information systems as we move into the 21st century. Despite spending over \$1.6 trillion on health care as a Nation, there are still serious concerns about high costs, avoidable medical errors, administrative inefficiencies, and poor coordination – all of which are closely connected to the failure to incorporate health information technology into our health care system.

- **Current health information systems use an outdated, paper-based system:** The innovation that has made our medical care the world's best has not been applied to our health information systems. America's medical professionals are the best and brightest in the world, and set the standard for the world. President Bush is working to ensure that America's health information systems match the high quality of the Nation's medical personnel.
- **America's patients deserve an up-to-date medical information system.**
 - A patient's vital medical information is scattered, and full records are often unavailable at the time of care, and especially during emergency care.
 - Patients lack access to useful, credible health information to choose the best treatment for their needs, and manage their own wellness.
- **America's doctors should have a high-quality, health information system to best serve their patients.**
 - Physicians are not able to keep vast amounts of information about drugs, interactions, and guidelines easily at hand to select the best treatments for their patients.
 - Medical orders and prescriptions must be handwritten and are too often misunderstood.

▪ **THE PRESIDENT'S PLAN TO IMPROVE CARE AND SAVE LIVES THROUGH HEALTH IT**

- **President Bush's Health Information Technology Plan is continuing to address the longstanding problems in the Nation's health care system.** The President believes that better health information technology is essential to improve America's health care system, and he is committed to his goal of assuring that most Americans have electronic health records within the next 10 years. Electronic health records will share information privately and securely among and between health care providers when authorized by the patient.
- To achieve his 10-year goal, the President has taken the following steps to promote coordinated public- and private-sector efforts that will accelerate broader adoption of health care information technology:
 - **Using the Federal Government to Foster Greater Adoption of Health Information Technology.** The President plans to build on progress already made in this area by fostering regional collaborations and demonstration projects that will test the effectiveness of Health IT and encourage widespread adoption. The President has also directed the Federal government to coordinate its health information systems so that care delivered by the Federal government, reimbursement, and oversight is more efficient and cost-effective.
 - **Adopting Uniform Health Information Standards** to allow medical information to be stored and easily shared electronically while maintaining privacy.
 - Over the last several years, HHS has been collaborating with the private sector and other Federal agencies to identify and endorse voluntary standards necessary for health information to be shared safely and securely among health care providers.
 - The results of these projects include standards for transmitting X-rays over the Internet; electronic lab results transmitted to physicians for immediate analysis, diagnosis and treatment – assuring a prompt response and eliminating errors and duplicative testing due to lost laboratory reports; and standardized electronic prescriptions, which save time for patients and help to avoid serious medical errors.
- **The New National Health Information Technology Coordinator** is providing national leadership and the coordination necessary to achieve the President's 10-year goal. Dr. David Brailer, former Senior Fellow at the Health Technology Center in San Francisco, is guiding ongoing work on health information standards and processes to identify and implement the various steps needed to support and encourage health information technology in the public and private health care delivery systems. Dr. Brailer is also coordinating partnerships between government agencies and private sector stakeholders to speed the adoption of health information technology.